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JOB NO. 78-03131-A

BOX NO. 1

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TOTAL DOCS HEREIN 4

DOC	1	REV DATE	10/2/56	BY	25377
OPIC CODE	025	ORI	025	TYPE	12
OPIC CLASS	S	PAGE	35	REV CLASS	C
JUST	12	NEXT REV	2010	AUTH	HR 10-2

FDD Working Group on Foreign  
Languages  
3 Dec. 1952

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY <b>OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP</b>			
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<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVAL  <input type="checkbox"/> ACTION  <input type="checkbox"/> COMMENT  <input type="checkbox"/> CONCURRENCE           </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION  <input type="checkbox"/> DIRECT REPLY  <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARATION OF REPLY  <input type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDATION           </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> SIGNATURE  <input type="checkbox"/> RETURN  <input type="checkbox"/> DISPATCH  <input type="checkbox"/> FILE           </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(Orig. only sent)</p> <p>REMARKS: Attached hereto are the FDD comments on the [redacted] Committee's paper which you requested. They are lengthy and possibly not as tactfully expressed as they might be. In view of the splendid progress being made on liaison between the Divisions of ORR and FDD, due in a large part to [redacted] efforts, it is suggested that the FDD comments be returned to this Office after you have read them.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <span>SECRET</span> <span><u>CONFIDENTIAL</u></span> <span>RESTRICTED</span> <span>UNCLASSIFIED</span> </div>			

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
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☒ INFORMATION  
☐ DIRECT REPLY  
☐ PREPARATION OF REPLY  
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## Office Memorandum

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Director for Operations

DATE: 3 December 1952

FROM : Chief, Foreign Documents Division

SUBJECT: Final Report of the Working Group on Foreign Language Documents

There are submitted herewith comments on subject report:

1. In Part I of this report called The Problem there are a series of statements numbered 1 to 6 which I shall comment on in order.

a. The first part of statement Number 1 is that "documentary materials have not been procured on any regular basis." This statement taken at face value is obviously false. As you know the Foreign Documents Division for a period of five years has followed a program of regular procurement of foreign newspapers and periodicals of intelligence interest. That this program is regular is shown by the fact that we have over 1500 subscriptions in effect. I feel that as far as newspapers and periodicals are concerned, there has been procurement on a regular basis and as such has been a coordinated effort with the IAC agencies. Insofar as books and monographs are concerned, there has been neither program guidance from the consumer offices as to their desires or needs nor sufficient personnel available to handle such materials if procured. Books and monographs, of course, can only be procured when and as they are published and become available; hence, "on a regular basis" can only mean that there be (a) in Soviet bloc countries, a system of guide requirements in the hands of the procurement people, for if they were not permitted to procure on the spot, most materials would become quickly unavailable; and (b) in countries outside the Soviet bloc, a system, in addition to guide requirements, whereby there is (1) the submission by procurement people of lists of available material; (2) a methodical screening of such lists by intelligence in Washington; and (3) consequent direction to the procurement people for action on specific items. Both of these systems have been used by FDD and are now in use. The question that remains then is one merely of extent to which books and monographs should be procured on a regular basis. The second part of this statement is that "no systematic efforts have been made to counteract the increasingly strict 'Iron Curtain' conditions." As you know we have been constantly aware of this problem since the end of the war and have taken a number of steps to counteract these conditions. Systematic seems an inappropriate adjective here, except within the meaning

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that every effort should be made. We have exerted constant effort to counteract these conditions all the way from maintaining a high classification on our reports to the use of very devious methods of actual procurement of restricted items. Nevertheless, there is still the element of human fallibility and a practical concern of sufficient staffing for an effort which until this time has not received serious backing by the consumer offices of the Agency. The third part of this statement is that "the present procurement activities of the several agencies are generally uncoordinated and often result in wasteful competition with each other." I believe this statement to be untrue. I feel that the present procurement activities of the IAC agencies in the field of foreign documents is generally coordinated. We are aware of what documentary materials the other IAC agencies are procuring, and we have made each of them aware of what the others are procuring or not procuring. We do not have direction of these procurement activities, and coordination implies a submission and dissemination of the knowledge of what each is doing so that each may take the appropriate steps necessary to avoid wasteful competition. I believe at the present time there is very little wasteful competition between these agencies. That there is competition and duplication is necessary for various specific needs of the respective agencies. No matter what ideal program might be set up for the handling of foreign language documents as a centralized activity of the IAC agencies, there will still be need for duplication in the procurement of specific materials for specific needs. I would say, in general, that we have been far more successful in getting cooperation and a coordinated procurement program with the other IAC agencies than we have within CIA itself. The CIA Library has consistently refused to coordinate procurement efforts with us and likewise has consistently refused to let us see results of procurement efforts that were not specifically asked for by us. I can recognize the desire on the part of analysts in ORR, OCI, OSI and other offices to read Pravda or Izvestiya and, as a result, there are multiple copies of these papers procured for Agency offices. Whether this is wasteful competition can only be answered by an investigation of the specific needs and uses of the material in the offices concerned. I could agree that more coordination could be accomplished. This cannot, however, extend to the point of direction unless the procurement activities are centralized under one agency. I do not feel that we can deny the right of the agencies to procure material they feel they need even though there be a central activity for the handling of foreign language documents.

b. The next statement is that "acquired materials are not identified, cataloged, distributed or stored in any regular manner." This is an extremely broad statement and it is difficult to judge what is meant by "regular manner." All acquired

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materials in the way of newspapers and periodicals in the Foreign Documents Division are identified by title in an annual publication called "Foreign Language Serial Publications Received and Screened by FDD." All books and monographs acquired are identified through inclusion in the CIA Library accessions lists. All books and monographs are cataloged in conjunction with the CIA Library and both maintain catalog cards on file. It is difficult to see in just what sense cataloging is intended with reference to newspapers and periodicals, except in a storage capacity. Distribution implies both a need and availability. Those materials acquired by FDD have been available and have been distributed within the realm of practicability where there has been an expressed need. Acquired materials of FDD are stored in a regular manner. The second part of this statement is that "no one knows what materials are or are not available in Washington or in the private libraries of the country." I feel this statement is mostly wrong. I believe you know we cover approximately 90% of what is or is not available in Washington. We survey the private libraries of the country as much as our facilities allow and know the holdings of many of the big university libraries very well. Knowing what materials are or are not available is a constant process, in my opinion, and a considerably larger staff, mostly employed traveling throughout the country, would be required to keep abreast of acquisitions of private libraries throughout the country.

c. The first part of the next statement to the effect that "secondary sources are often translated to the neglect of basic primary sources" is again a generalization that is difficult to comment on without a more specific indication of what is meant. What to one person may be a secondary source may be a primary source to another. As translation is undertaken at the specific request of the consumer offices, this could refer to the question of priorities, with the implication that what is regarded as a secondary source by the economic people is translated as a primary source for the political, scientific, or operational people. In no case, however, is this done to the neglect of other requesters. If there is an actual neglect of basic primary sources, the error lies in the failure of economic analysts to provide us with appropriate requirements or to draw it to our attention. The second part of this statement is that "the translations are, in certain cases, unnecessarily duplicative." As you know it has been our earnest endeavor over the past four years to avoid duplication in translation. I feel that these efforts have been successful. Some minor duplication may exist, but I do not feel that within the IAC there are cases that are unnecessarily duplicative, with one exception, with which I believe you are already well aware. That is the case of the

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Treasure Island project in the Library of Congress sponsored by the Air Force. Their project has been discussed many, many times. They are fully aware of areas of duplication and have stated that they feel such duplication is necessary for their purposes. Even there we have endeavored to work as closely as possible to eliminate potential fringe areas of duplication. The last part of this statement is that a "lack of specific subject competence on the part of translators sometimes results in inadequate translations." The need of specific subject competence is a well-recognized problem. However, I do not feel that it will ever be completely overcome. The point of inadequate translations is an obscure one. A translation is a translation, and, as I see it in this case, a translation could only be inadequate if it were either incomplete or incorrect. We provide a translation service for what the requester wants; hence, it must be complete in meeting his needs. On the correctness of translations, we have leaned over backwards to assure exact faithfulness to the original. I seriously doubt incorrectness in our translations, except within the very small percentage of human fallibility.

d. This statement is concerned with "the failure to provide for the systematic translation of basic intelligence materials." If there has been such a failure, the reason is twofold. First, there has been a lack of guidance or even a statement of interest that such a program be undertaken. And secondly, there has been the limitation of facilities in the way of personnel and funds to do so. The last part of this statement is to the effect that "basic research translation programs have been initiated without reference to the intelligence responsibilities and activities of the other IAC agencies." This statement is highly doubtful. First, there is a question of definition of basic research translation program. If by this, through some extension of meaning, is meant the exploitation of the press and periodicals, then the statement is wrong as that program was initiated in coordination with the other IAC agencies. If by this is meant the translation service of FDD, such service was established to meet the specific needs of the various offices for translation of their own material, and, even though any one of them may now consider this to be a basic research translation program for their own needs, it is not so established, nor understood to be such.

e. The next statement is that "present facilities do not provide timely flow of current information from overt sources." I do not know here whether it is meant that the information does not reach the consumer offices as quickly as they would like to see it, or whether it is meant that present facilities could provide it faster even within the imposed limitations. If the former is meant, I agree that we can always seek to reach the ideal of having it on the analyst's desk in translated

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form immediately after it is published in Moscow or elsewhere. Such a procedure or even an approach to this ideal would call for extravagant facilities virtually impossible under present conditions. If the latter is meant, I must disagree. Timeliness of information has always been an element in intelligence operations, and we have been quite aware of it from the beginning and have done everything in our power to provide the information in a timely fashion, based on the desires of the consumer offices. We have even changed our entire system of processing from time to time to meet these specific desires. However, it should be pointed out that not all researchers nor even all offices will agree on just what is the best method to provide the information in the form and time that best meets their needs. Since our last major change, this point has not been raised with us by any of our major consumers, and I would be interested in a more specific elaboration at this point.

f. This statement that "little attention has been paid to the problem of recruiting and training translators either in terms of the specific task of translating for intelligence purposes or in terms of meeting estimated future needs" is completely false. As you well know it has been one of our constant problems and one to which we have given a tremendous amount of attention. Recruiting, of course, is the province of the Personnel Office, but for years we have worked closely with them in providing advice, leads, and specific names. I believe, with their facilities, they have been doing a good job for us. On the side of training, I am certain that the Office of Training will bear me out that we probably have made greater use of training and training facilities than perhaps any other office, let alone division in the Agency. I believe the authors of this statement were ignorant of the facts.

2. The second part of the paper entitled Discussion is more or less given up to an idealistic categorization of those steps in the processing of foreign language documents which the Working Group considers necessary. However, I should like to comment briefly on certain aspects of these six steps as follows:

a. Procurement

The last sentence of this paragraph states that the "publication procurement program should be coordinated by the intelligence producing agencies." I doubt, to some degree, whether this is feasible in practice. Coordination of the procurement program is one that requires constant attention and knowledge of numerous details. It would be more understandable if it had read that "policy governing an integrated publication procurement program be coordinated by the intelligence producing agencies," and leave the actual coordination work to the intelligence collection agencies or offices.

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## b. Cataloging

This paragraph is devoted to the issuance of periodic accessions lists. An accessions list has been the subject of alternating desire and apathy by the intelligence producing offices over the years. It seems to be more a subject of individual preference. As recently as a week ago, I proposed an accessions list on Chinese periodicals to several offices including the State Department and was told this was not desired. Apparently, a majority on this particular Working Group were of the turn of mind that wanted accessions lists. I have nothing against accessions lists, but I believe, from a practical standpoint, thought might be better given to accessions lists on a selective basis and to the practical extent to which analysts in the consumer offices can effectively make use of a large volume of accessions lists in their day-to-day job.

## c. Utilization of Basic Materials

In the first paragraph, which is given over to abstracting, the last sentence states that the procedures suggested will obviate the time-consuming translating activity. I believe this is perhaps a slightly too rosy picture and is dependent in part on an established funneling of all documents to the abstracting service instead of a dispersal within the Agency as at present. The second and third paragraphs are more or less statements of what is already available subject to personnel and budget limitations.

## d. Utilization of Current Materials

The fourth paragraph, which considers the exploitation of current newspapers and periodicals, states in the third sentence that this service should be made more directly responsive to specific needs of the IAC agencies. It is difficult to understand what is meant by this statement. The present service operates only against the stated specific needs of the IAC agencies and is therefore directly responsive to their specific needs as stated. If it is meant that we do not answer all of their needs, this could be true and due to personnel limitations. However, I do not know how a service could be more directly responsive unless it were physically located in the IAC agencies' offices. However, I do think this is more a matter of each agency feeling that we do not do enough for them, which results in the thought that if we are not doing everything they want, we are doing more work for some other agency or office. This problem then must be tied up with priorities, education and availability of personnel. This is followed by a statement that the more complete utilization of the provincial press is desirable. It should be clarified as to whether this means the

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It is only within these terms that I can understand the need for such a split. With these terms in mind the scope of such operations becomes almost alarming in size. The chairman of the Working Group told me that the group had not concerned itself with consideration of T/Os, budgets, personnel, or administration. Considering overall, I would estimate the services recommended, based on the discussion, would call for at least a tripling of the present personnel and funds. I will not go into details here of what this would actually amount to because I believe that it is generally recognized that the present activity should be expanded and that it is more pertinent that a good understanding of the underlying principles be established and recognized, principally by means of an NSCID, than to state explicitly what this expansion would ultimately mean in terms of personnel and budget. Further, in view of problems of personnel recruitment and training, experience has taught us that a gradual planned expansion is preferable. I doubt that it should be called translation service in that it incorporates abstracting, digesting, extracting, and summarizing as well as translation. All of these activities we have heretofore incorporated under the term Document Exploitation. It is noted also as a part of this recommendation that detached units of this service should be physically housed, wherever possible, in propinquity to intelligence research offices. However, the tone of the entire paper points to the need for centralization of document processing activities as a service of common concern. Any steps toward decentralization should then be viewed with extreme caution as a distinct danger to the effectiveness of the desired service. Only on a very small scale and with limited functions should such steps be considered at this time. The final recommendation is concerned with the establishment of a Foreign Language Board which would direct the bibliographic and translation services mentioned above. A Foreign Language Board consisting of representatives of each of the IAC agencies is considered advisable provided it acts in an advisory capacity to assist such a service of common concern. These activities must be directed by a full-time manager. The multitudinous details of day-to-day operations must be decided expeditiously and not be subject to deliberations of a board. Provision for such a manager is not made in the recommendations and I do not frankly see how these activities can be operated without one. There should be a board or committee which can act as a clearing house on document problems; that will consider policy direction, overall priorities, and the problems developed in the coordination of documentary activities within intelligence, and make its recommendations accordingly to the CIA or appropriate agencies concerned.

#### 4. Conclusions

I believe that, although poorly stated in many parts, the basic principle that this paper is endeavoring to get at is sound. Namely, there is a need for a service of common concern on foreign

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language documents. The fact that there has not been one, clearly defined and recognized, has led in the past to many problems and misunderstandings that might have been avoided. As noted at several points in the paper, they have tried to approach the problem ideally and without consideration of existing facilities, and this, of course, has led to proposals which are at variation with, and in some cases almost incompatible with, the realities of the situation. Also, I believe most of the members of the Working Group were from intelligence producing offices and viewed the problem from the position of the ultimate consumer. Hence, it would be advisable if this paper, which reports the opinions of the research offices, could be coordinated with the officials on the administrative side in the IAC agencies so as to determine their view as to its practicability. However, a better approach now that there is a recognized need by these offices for such a service of common concern would be to urge for quick consideration and adoption of a straight-forward uncluttered version of an NSCID such as has been prepared by the Office of Operations and let the CIA concern itself with the details of implementation afterwards by means of DCI directives and deliberations of a foreign language board or committee for this purpose.

Specifically I would recommend that we urge:

- a. Adoption of an NSCID for a service of common concern, but divested of the organizational and operational detail recommended in the report.
- b. Provision for a Foreign Language Board or Committee, but in an advisory capacity.
- c. Consideration of organizational details as an internal CIA matter subject to further study and discussion.
- d. Consideration of operational details by the Foreign Language Board or Committee.



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